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Royal Academy of Arts 1973

ULI NIMPTSCH RA
Sculptor

Photograph by courtesy of Stanley Devon of the Sunday Times

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Sculptor

August - September 1973

Royal Academy of Arts
Diploma Galleries
Piccadilly
London W1V ODS

General Information

This exhibition opens on Saturday 4th August and closes on Sunday 23rd September 1973.

Hours of Admission
Weekdays 10am - 6pm
Sundays 2pm - 6pm

Price of Admission 30p
20p Mondays

Illustrated Catalogue 45p

Reduced price admissions
Direct admission at the officially reduced price of 15p (Mondays 10p) for Students, Teachers accompanying parties, Members of Staff Associations, Working Men's or Girl's Clubs, or similar organizations and Pensioners can be obtained at the entrance to the Exhibition on production of a current student or membership card, pension book or other form of identification.

Visitors are required to give up their sticks, umbrellas and cameras before entering the galleries. They can be left with the attendants at the Cloakroom in the Entrance Hall. The other attendants are strictly forbidden to take charge of anything. Invalids may use their own rubber-tyred wheeled chairs or obtain the use of one without charge by previous arrangement. Application should be made to the Registry for the necessary authority.

Introduction

In 1952 Sir Frank Brangwyn was the first living Member of the Royal Academy to be honoured with a retrospective exhibition. Since then a number of such one-man shows have been held and the present exhibition of the work of the sculptor Mr Uli Nimptsch is the eighth in the series and the first time that a sculptor Member has been chosen.

Uli Nimptsch first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1957 when his *Reclining Figure* purchased for the Chantrey Bequest was shown and since then he has only twice been absent from the Summer Exhibition.

He was elected an Associate Member in 1958 and a full Academician in 1967.

I must express our warm thanks to all those owners who have so kindly made important loans and especially to the sculptor himself and his wife who has helped so much with preparatory work. We are also very grateful to Mr Hugh Scrutton, Director of the National Galleries of Scotland, for contributing a perceptive introduction to this catalogue.

Thomas Monnington
President

Preface

In 1944 the first public exhibition of the work of Uli Nimptsch to be held in this country was shown at Leeds alongside an Exhibition of French Paintings of the 19th and 20th centuries. And the 1957 Liverpool Exhibition was staged in the company of the Walker Art Gallery's permanent collection of European paintings of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. On both occasions the result was to demonstrate the strictly traditional nature of Nimptsch's art – and his power to re-animate the tradition.

To be specific, Nimptsch's work shows the clear influence of Renoir, Despiau and Maillol. And like these sculptors, he is at times (especially in his early work) positively Neo-classical. His mature work brings in another element – that of the Renaissance. On the one hand the studied grace and elaborate contrapposto of such figures as *Julia* (No. 40) or *The Birth of Venus* (No.41) recall Giovanni Bologna or Vittoria. On the other, the small groups and reliefs, and indeed all the sculptures involving movement and action, remind one of Peter Vischer the Younger's figures on the St. Sebaldus tomb at Nuremberg.

I name these various influences to clear the ground, and to show that Nimptsch is an exceptionally learned sculptor. He is moreover learned not only in certain chosen works of the past, but in the subject of those works – the human body, especially that of woman. He stands or falls by the expressive power he finds in our bodies, and by his ability to transmit this carefully, subtly and energetically to the bronze. His art consists not in self-expression as nowadays understood, but in revealing the formal grace and dramatic power of naked man and woman.

In other words Nimptsch is a traditional classical humanist. This puts him at odds with the entire mainstream movement of modern art which has flowed away from humanism towards abstraction (on the one hand) and the primitive (on the other). Paradoxically therefore, Nimptsch's simple and lucid sculpture is not merely unfashionable, but is harder for most people to enjoy than the infinitely more obscure work of specifically modern sculptors – which hits the taste of our time more directly. Many people will feel that an artist so traditional has nothing to contribute. And indeed I think that occasionally Nimptsch is too modest, and that his respect for the classic achievements of the past has led him to produce a work of art that is too pure to be true – to nature. I would instance the *Girl with Fishes* (No. 10) as a case in point. But in the great bulk of his work the thing is very different. While one may recognise the influence of such-and-such an older artist, the work before one's eyes is in fact *not* a pastiche. It is traditional – but it lives. It is not only humanist, but also human.

While Nimptsch has never sought popularity, he has long had serious admirers, and he has had a number of commissions, both public and private. I wonder if the moment has come when his work might reach a wide public. I have already said that humanist art – if made today – is unfashionable and therefore inherently unpopular. But perhaps I am out-of-date in this view. There has after all been an enormous swing of interest towards what we broadly call Victorian art. That includes a great deal that is academic and humanist. Perhaps this exhibition may evoke a more widespread response than I have assumed. This would be agreeable – and just. But it would not signify much – other than a change in public taste. We may echo Addison :

" 'Tis not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more, Sempronius ; we'll deserve it."

This expresses the view that Nimptsch's admirers have long held about his work. I am convinced of its truth, and I am delighted that the Royal Academy is staging this Exhibition.

Hugh Scrutton

Biographical note

Úli Nimptsch was born in 1897 in Berlin. At 17 he went to the Fine Art High School there, where he remained for nearly ten years. In 1931 he went to Switzerland for a few months, and then to Italy. He lived in Rome from 1931 to 1938. Then after a year in Paris, he came to London in 1939, where he has lived since. Exhibitions of his work have been held in London (the Redfern Gallery) in 1942, at Leeds (Temple Newsam) in 1944 and at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool in 1957. He is represented in the Tate Gallery, the House of Commons, the galleries at Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester and Bremen and in the Arts Council's collection. He has received commissions for his work from the London County Council and the public library at Luton.

Catalogue

Unless otherwise indicated all works are lent by the artist.

1
Self Portrait
Head, bronze. *c.* 1920
Life-size.

2
Standing Girl
Bronze. Berlin *c.* 1928
Signed *Uli NS*.
h. 60in

Lent by the Kunsthalle Bremen.

3
Fat Girl (I)
Sitting figure, bronze. Berlin *c.* 1930
$8 \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$in

4
Fat Girl (II)
Sitting figure, bronze. Berlin *c.* 1930
$8 \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$in

Nos. 2 and 3 were done from the same model as a pair.

5
Griselda
Bronze standing figure. Rome, 1932.
$48 \times 10 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$in

6
Girl combing her hair
Bronze. Rome, 1933
$5\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$in

Exh. Leeds no. 55; Liverpool no. 2.

7
Standing Boy
Bronze. Bavaria, 1936
$26 \times 9 \times 5$in

8
Venetian Girl
Head, bronze. Rome, 1936
Life-size.

9
Marietta
Nude figure, bronze. 1936-8
Inscribed *Uli Nimptsch, Rome 1938*
62½×19in

Exh. Leeds no. 59 ; Liverpool no. 6.

Lent by City Art Gallery, Leeds

10
Girl with Fishes
Bronze fountain figure. Bavaria, 1937
23×9×4in

11
Jone
Standing nude figure, resin. Rome, 1938
Signed *U.N.*
62×19×13½in

12
Susanna and the Elders (I)
Bronze relief. 1941
Signed *U.N. 41*
7¾×7¾in

Exh. Leeds, no. 41 ; Liverpool no. 9.

13
The Temptation – Adam and Eve
Relief in lead. 1941
Signed *U.N. 41*
7½×7½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 8, cast in bronze ; Leeds, no. 62.

14
Ulysses and the Sirens
Bronze relief. 1942
Signed *U.N.*
12½×12½in

Exh. Leeds, no. 63 ; Liverpool, no. 13.

15 *Illustrated on page 13*
Charon
Bronze relief.
Signed *U.N. 1942*
18½×18½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 33.

The same subject as the group in the round no. 36 : RA 1962, no. 1101.

16
Girl on a Stool, gazing
Seated figure, bronze. Richmond, 1942
7½×5×4in

Exh. Leeds no. 67 ; Liverpool no. 10.

17
The Singer
Bronze relief. 1942
Signed *U.N. 42.*
12¼×11¾in

Exh. Leeds no. 68 ; Liverpool, no. 11 ; RA 1971, no. 999.

18
Vanity
Girl with a mirror, bronze. London, 1942-3
16×8½×6½in

19
The Flute Player
Bronze relief. 1943
12½×12in

Exh. Leeds, no. 69 ; Liverpool no. 14 ; RA 1971, no. 998.

20
Jacob wrestling with the Angel
Bronze relief. 1944
Signed *U.N.*
19×19in

Exh. Leeds, no. 73 ; Liverpool, no. 16 ; RA 1964, no. 1144.

21
Standing Girl
Bronze. 1945
Signed *U.N. 45.*
17½×4×3½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 20.

Lent by Mrs C. Reis.

22
Susanna and the Elders (II)
Bronze relief. 1945
Signed *U.N. 45.*
11¾×11½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 18.

23
Standing girl with drapery
Bronze. London, 1945
Signed *U.N. 45.*
46½×18in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 17.

24
Pomona
Standing girl, bronze. London, 1946
49 × 23 × 15in

Exh. RA 1958, no. 1418.

25
David and Goliath
Bronze relief. 1948
Signed *U.N.*
17 × 16¾in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 24 ; RA 1964, no. 1146.

26 *Illustrated on page 14*
Portrait of Paul Oppé, Esq., CB
Head, bronze. 1949
Signed *U.N. 49.*
Life-size.

Exh. Liverpool, no. 26.

Lent by Miss Armide Oppé.

27
David and Goliath
Bronze group. 1950
Signed *U.N.*
9½ × 8¾in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 28.

Lent by Peter Pears, Esq., CBE.

28
Rosamund
Nude figure touching her foot, bronze.
Signed *U.N. 1951.*
11½ × 7½ × 7in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 29.

29
Girl with her Foot on a Stool
Seated figure, chiselled bronze.
London, 1952
Signed *U.N.*
7¼ × 5½ × 4in

30 *Illustrated on page 15*
Girl sitting on a Stone Plinth
Bronze.
Signed. *U.N. 1952.*
24 × 14 × 24in

A cast in the collection of the Arts Council.

31
Girl considering her Big Toe
Nude figure, chiselled bronze. 1953
10 × 5½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 30 ; RA 1966, no. 63.

Lent by W. F. G. Sutcliffe, Esq.

32
Baubo
Baubo the witch on her sow. (The subject is from Goethe : *Faust.*) Bronze 1954
Signed *U.N. 1954.*
6½ × 6½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 32.

Lent by the Countess of Strafford.

33
Charon
Bronze group. London, 1956
16½ × 21 × 9½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 36 : RA 1971, no. 1000.

34 *Illustrated on page 16*
Girl pulling on her Stocking
Seated figure, bronze. 1956
Signed *U.N.*
10 × 8 × 7½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 35 ; RA 1958, no. 1429.

35 *Illustrated on page 17*
Olympia
Reclining nude figure, bronze.
London, 1956
23 × 44 × 18in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 34.

Other casts in the Tate Gallery and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

36
Joy
Girl lying on her back, kicking.
Chiselled bronze. 1957
Signed *U.N.*
9½ × 7½in

Exh. Liverpool, no. 38.

37
Portrait of Admiral Sir Caspar John, KCB
Head, bronze. 1957
Life-size.

Exh. Liverpool, no. 40, RA 1959, no. 1419.

38
Snake in the Grass
Lying figure, bronze. London, 1957
3½ × 6 × 11½in

39
Danae
Lying figure, bronze. London, 1958
21 × 29 × 11in

Exh. RA 1966, no. 66.

40 *Illustrated on page 18*
Julia
Bronze figure of a girl slipping from a stool. London, 1958
37 × 12 × 13in

Lent by the Tate Gallery.

41
Birth of Venus
Bronze fountain figure. London, 1959
46 × 31 × 32in

Exh. RA 1960, no. 1456.

42
Seated Girl
Bronze. London, *c.* 1966
Signed *U.N.*
h. 12in

Exh. RA 1966, no. 65; RA 1968, no. 1158.

The artist's Diploma work deposited on his election as Academician in 1967.

Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts.

43
The Young Reader
Wax. 1967
$10\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{4} \times 5$in

Maquette for bronze group in the entrance hall of the library at Luton.

44
Portrait of Sir Mortimer Wheeler, CH
Head, bronze. 1969
Life-size.

Exh. RA 1969, no. 1253.

Lent by the British Academy.

45
Portrait of James Fitton Esq., RA
Head, bronze. 1970
Life-size.

Exh. RA 1971, no. 996.

46
Chatting Girls
Bronze group. London, 1970
$11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2} \times 7$in

Exh. RA 1969, no. 1239.

47
Girl slipping from a Stool (II)
Bronze. London, 1970
$16\frac{1}{2} \times 6 \times 5$in

48
Portrait of Professor Carel Weight, CBE, RA
Head, bronze. 1971
Life-size.

Exh. RA 1971, no. 997.

Lent by Professor Carel Weight, CBE, RA.

49
Girl with Slipper
Seated figure, bronze.
Signed *U.N. 1971.*
$9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$in

50 *Illustrated on page 19*
Lot and his Daughters
Bronze relief. 1973
$23\frac{1}{2} \times 25$in

51
Debby
Sitting girl, bronze. 1973
$12\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2} \times 7$in

52
Genesis
Wax relief. 1973
60 × 25in

53
Ganymede
Bronze
$10\frac{1}{2} \times 16 \times 5$in

Lent by the Countess of Strafford.

54
Girl on a Dolphin
Bronze doorknocker.

The first cast made for the villa of the artist's friend, Oskar Kokoschka.

Lent by the Countess of Strafford.

55
Boy on a Dolphin
Maquette for a wall fountain. Bronze
7 × 7in

Lent by Peter M. Nimptsch, Esq.

56
Europa
Bronze.
7 × 7in

Lent by Peter M. Nimptsch, Esq.

57-58
Drawings (2)
Studies of the nude figure. 1956

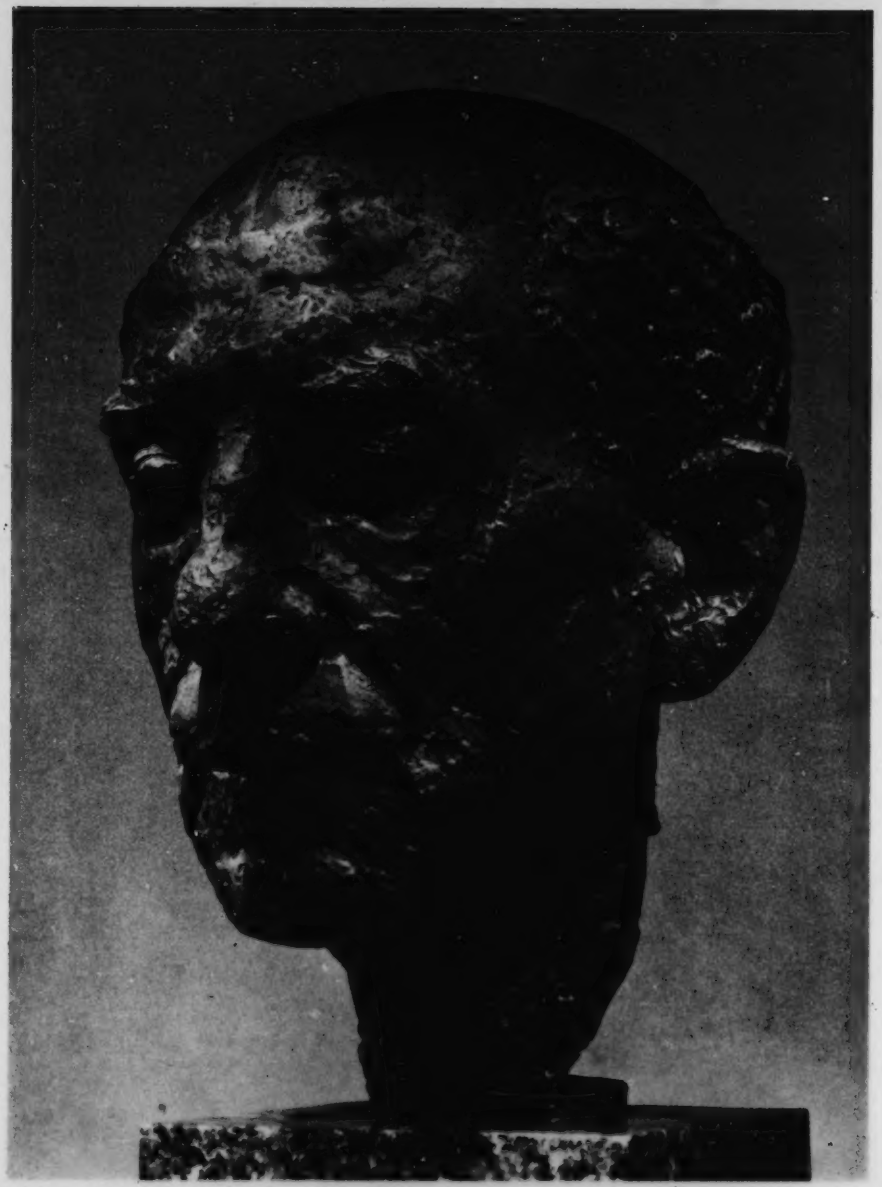
Lent by the Countess of Strafford.

59
Drawing
Study of the nude figure.

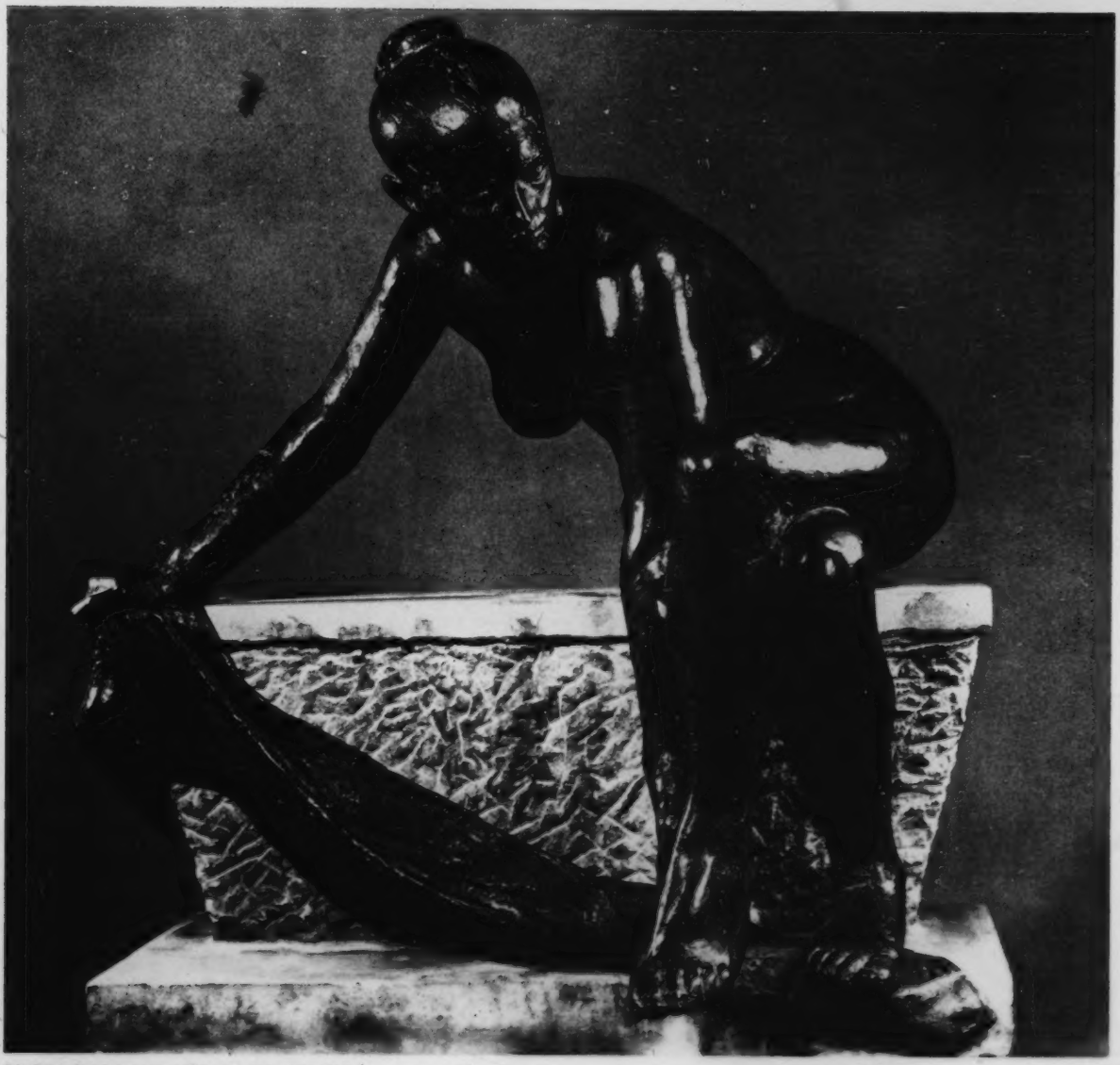
Lent by Mrs C. Reis.

60-69 *No. 60 illustrated on page 20*
Drawings (10)
Studies of the nude figure and heads.

15 **Charon** 194



26 Portrait of Paul Oppé, Esq., CB 1949



30 Girl Sitting on a Stone Plinth 1952

34 Girl Pulling on her Stocking 1956

35 Olympia 1956

40 Julia 1958

50 Lot and his Daughters 1973

60 **Drawing** 1956